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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 PRETORIA 002569

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [SF](#)

SUBJECT: HANI ASSASSINATION CONTINUES TO HAUNT MBEKI

Classified By: Political Counselor Raymond Brown. Reasons 1.4(b) and (d).

11. (C) SUMMARY. Once again, the 14-year old political assassination of South African Communist Party (SACP) and ANC armed wing (Umkhonto we Sizwe) leader Chris Hani has grabbed the media spotlight, starting with the SACP's resolution calling for a renewed investigation and ending with the South African Broadcasting Corporation's attempts to prevent the airing of a controversial documentary, "Thabo Mbeki: Unauthorized," which mentions Mbeki's rumored involvement. The National Prosecuting Authority responded by reminding the SACP that the two confessed killers are behind bars, but added that if the SACP were to present new evidence, they would act upon it. In the run-up to the ANC election, where the political climate is awash with political conspiracies, the latest whisperings are more likely an attempt to undermine Mbeki than a desire to seek the truth. They are also unlikely to do any serious damage to Mbeki's already mixed reputation. END SUMMARY.

SACP CALLS ON NPA TO REOPEN CASE

12. (U) The South African Communist Party (SACP) adopted on 15 July at its 12th congress a recommendation calling for the 1993 Chris Hani murder case to be reopened, despite the fact that the National Prosecuting Authority (NPA) considers the case closed. (NOTE: Janusz Walus, a Polish anti-communist immigrant, and Clive Derby-Lewis, a senior Conservative Party MP, admitted to the crime with the motive of derailing anti-apartheid negotiations. They are currently serving life sentences. END NOTE) Underlying the SACP's call is their belief that Walus and Derby-Lewis were acting on behalf of President Mbeki or other ANC members who were afraid that the charismatic Hani would become Mandela's Deputy President and eventually State President. The SACP has since admitted it has no new information but continues to cite the fact that the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) refused to give the pair political amnesty in 1999 because they did not believe that Walus and Derby-Lewis told the entire truth about the crime. The SACP (again) has called on anyone with information related to the case to contact the NPA. The NPA, in turn, has said that it will only reopen the case only if it receives "tangible and fresh evidence."

GUILTY ADAMANTLY DENY MBEKI INVOLVED

13. (U) On 19 July, Walus' and Derby-Lewis' lawyers sent a letter to the SACP, expressing their willingness to answer any questions they may have about the assassination, further

fueling the rumor mill that the two convicted men are only now ready to tell the truth. However, speaking from Pretoria's central prison, Derby-Lewis told The Sunday Tribune this weekend he is willing to divulge the same facts he gave to the TRC, especially the reason why Hani did not have bodyguards around him the day he was killed. Though Derby-Lewis will not divulge the reason, he added that he believes the SACP already knows the answer. Even more damaging, Derby-Lewis added that, "Thabo Mbeki is definitely not involved. I do not know him from a bar of soap...To suggest there was any involvement by others in this murder is a lot of twaddle."

14. (SBU) According to Derby-Lewis, his lawyers have tried unsuccessfully to contact SACP several times with no response. Derby-Lewis' efforts to reach out are more likely an attempt on his part to paint himself as a man with nothing to hide, who has shared everything he knows with both the TRC and Hani's comrades. Derby-Lewis will be up for parole again next year.

SABC TRIES TO STOP MBEKI DOCUMENTARY

15. (C) Earlier last week, the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) applied for an urgent interdict to prevent Broad Daylight Films from airing a 24-minute unauthorized documentary of President Mbeki, saying that "serious issues of defamation abound in the film." (NOTE: Broad Daylight Films decided to air the film around the country after SABC refused for months to air it on SABC as originally agreed. END NOTE) Press reports note that Mbeki is described in the

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film as emotionally void, distant, and at times paranoid. Senior ANC Researcher Wande Makalima joked with PolOff on 20 July that everyone knows Mbeki is cold and that those who have seen the short film have described it as "boring." In the documentary, Mbeki is also described as a "Gucci revolutionary," while Hani was "out there in his fatigues." The film mentions that there were rumors of Mbeki's involvement, but producers added at SABC's request that Walus and Derby-Lewis were convicted and tried for the crime. Without explanation, the SABC dropped its request late last week and Broad Daylight Films is continuing to show the film around the country. Makalima suspects that after the barrage of bad publicity surrounding SABC's request, they realized they were doing more harm than good.

COMMENT

16. (C) Accusations of Mbeki's involvement in Hani's murder have surfaced intermittently over the past 14 years, but have never been taken seriously by the NPA and do not seem to have hurt Mbeki within the party. Instead, they are often viewed as smear campaigns against Mbeki at critical points in his political career, these next few months being a case in point. The SACP leadership's intermittent calls for investigation without any new evidence, coupled with their refusal thus far to meet with the killers, also somewhat discredits the rumors. Nevertheless, there is likely still a small cohort within the SACP who only view Mbeki in terms of a cold and calculating politician who was either involved or complicit in the murder and there is likely no way to convince them otherwise.
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